

Thomas Jefferson to William Carmichael and William Short, November 3, 1792, with Copy , from The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.

TO THE U. S. COMMISSIONERS TO SPAIN¹ J. MSS. (CARMICHAEL AND SHORT)

1 Washington wrote to Jefferson concerning this as follows:

“ Philadelphia Novr. 3d. 1792.

“ Dear Sir,—Your letter to Messrs. Carmichael and Short (now returned) is full & proper.—I have added a word or two with a pencil, which may be inserted or not as you shall think best.—The intention of them is to do away the charge of Sovereignty over more than are within our own territory.

“The erasures from the Speech as you advise are made, except exchange the word ‘high’ for ‘just.’ If facts will justify the former (as I think they indubitably do), policy, I conceive, is much in its favor:—For while so many unpleasant things are announced as the Speech contains, it cannot be amiss to accompany them with communications of a more agreeable nature.—I am always—Yours.”

Philadelphia Nov 3, 1792.

Gentlemen, —I wrote you on the 14th of last month, since which some other incidents and documents have occurred bearing relation to the subject of that letter. I therefore now inclose you a duplicate of that letter.

Library of Congress

“Copy of a letter from the Govr. of Georgia, with the deposition it covered of a Mr. Hull & an original passport signed by Olivier wherein he stiles himself Commissary for his Catholic majesty with the Creeks.

“Copy of a letter from Messrs. Viar & Jaudenes to myself, dated Oct. 29. with that of the extract of a letter of Sep. 24. from the Baron Carondelet to them.

“Copy of my answer of Nov. 1. to them, and

“Copy of a letter from myself to the President, stating a conversation with those gentlemen.”

From these papers you will find that we have been constantly endeavoring by every possible means to keep peace with the Creeks, that in order to do this we have even suspended & still suspend the running a fair boundary between them & us, as agreed to us by themselves, & having for object the precise definition of their & our lands, so as to prevent encroachment on either side, & that we have constantly endeavored to keep them at peace with the Spanish settlements here; that Spain on the contrary, or at least the officers of her governments, since the arrival of the Baron de Carondelet, has undertaken to keep an Agent among the Creeks, has excited them, & the other Southern Indians to commence

a war against us, has furnished them with arms & ammunition for the express purpose of carrying on that war, and prevented the Creeks from running the boundary which would have removed the source of differences from between us. Messrs. Viar & Jaudenes explain the ground of interference on the fact of the Spanish claim to that territory, and on an article in our treaty with the Creeks putting themselves under our protection. But besides that you already know the nullity of their pretended claim to the territory, they had themselves set the example of endeavoring to strengthen that claim by the treaty mentioned in the letter of the Baron de Carondelet, and by the employment of an Agent

Library of Congress

among them.—The establishment of our boundary, committed to you, will, of course, remove the grounds of all future pretence to interfere with the Indians *within our territory*; and it was to such only that the treaty of New York stipulated protection; for we take for granted that Spain will be ready to agree to the principle that neither party has a right to stipulate protection or interference with the Indian nations inhabiting the territory of the other. But it is extremely material also with sincerity & good faith to patronize the peace of each other with the neighboring savages. We are quite disposed to believe that the late wicked excitements to war have proceeded from the Baron de Carondelet himself, without authority from his court. But if so, have we not reason to expect the removal of such an officer from our neighborhood, as an evidence of the disavowal of his proceedings. He has produced against us a serious war. He says

in his letter indeed that he has suspended it. But this he has not done, nor possibly can he do it. The Indians are more easily engaged in a war than withdrawn from it. They have made the attack in force on our frontiers, whether with or without his consent, and will oblige us to a severe punishment of their aggression. We trust that you will be able to settle principles of friendly concert between us & Spain with respect to the neighboring Indians: & if not that you will endeavor to apprise us of what we may expect that we may no longer be tied up by principles which, in that case would be inconsistent with duty & self-preservation.